

June 1st, 1959

Dear Mr. Lyons:

Many thanks for your kind letter which I deeply appreciate. I think that you and I should express to other laymen and doctors the feeling which I know we both share that the funds of the voluntary organizations are of enormous importance in the conquest of any disease, especially if they are administered by laymen and doctors who are dedicated to the elimination of that disease.

Ideas of importance come from many sources, and sometimes the ideas are so novel that one group - let's say represented by funds of the Federal Government - will reject support of them. If there are funds in other hands dedicated to research in cerebral palsy, cancer, heart diseases and the other killing and crippling diseases, it means that novel ideas have other chances of support and money. It is these ideas which become the building blocks for big pay-offs. It is dangerous to have all research funds under too centralized control, I have found.

Many times contributions of drug houses and independent small foundations have made it possible for the evaluation of drugs for new treatments and cures at various stages of their development. For instance, Dr. Waksman, who discovered streptomycin, the first antibiotic to cure tuberculosis, was supported by a grant from the Department of Agriculture of the U.S. Government. He also got sympathetic support from Merck & Co., who gave him and Rutgers University a royalty arrangement on streptomycin when they confirmed its usefulness. It just happens that this great discovery was made without funds either from the National Institutes of Health or from the National Tuberculosis Association.

I think what many laymen, and maybe even some doctors who are not in research, do not realize is that a final discovery is sometimes the result of support given for work continuing over many, many years. At present, neither government nor private

funds are adequate and they will not be adequate until the final answers are in on all the major causes of death and disability as we know them now.

Illnesses like tuberculosis, syphilis, gonorrhea, pneumonia and polio were all considered the "Will of God" until research proved otherwise, and I'm sure we will get the answers to the remaining problems if we have enough money to give encouragement from different sources to the many dedicated workers.

With deep appreciation for the contributions you make both to your voluntary organization and in helping to get larger Federal funds,

Yours,

Mr. Harry Lyons  
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